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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8781
INFO RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA 0535
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CJTJF HOA
RUZEFAA/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 000479

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/E AND ACTING A/S CARTER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - Sharif Previews Government Reforms, Sharia Law Plans

11. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador spoke to Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Sheikh Sharif in Nairobi at the beginning of Sharif's trip to Uganda and Burundi to thank those governments for their Africa Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) troop contributions. He said integration of former ARS and TFG forces was progressing, but that the security situation was tenuous. Sharif explained he was counseling peace and not responding to extremists' provocations, and that the public was behind him. To raise tax revenue, Sharif highlighted planned reforms at the air and sea ports, as well as a commission to discourage public corruption. He told the Ambassador he envisioned a moderate version of Sharia law, designed to blunt extremists' criticisms of his Islamic bona fides. He told us Kenyan President Kibaki had welcomed him warmly and pledged support. End Summary.

12. (U) The Ambassador spoke to TFG President Sheikh Sharif during his stop in Nairobi March 10. Sharif is traveling to Kenya, Burundi and Uganda to consult with regional leaders and thank the latter two countries for their contributions to the Africa Union Mission to Somalia stabilization force.

13. (SBU) Ambassador Ranneberger commended Sharif on naming a moderate government and reiterated U.S. support for the TFG. The Ambassador encouraged Sharif to bring reform and accountability to the government, and focus on capturing new sources of revenue to fund the TFG. The Ambassador briefed President Sharif on on-going U.S. development and humanitarian assistance and on the state of the \$5 million to support formation of a joint security force. The Ambassador acknowledged extremists' pressure on the government to implement Sharia law, but urged against radical versions of Sharia.

14. (U) President Sharif thanked the United States for its political support thus far, and previewed some of his government's initiatives to improve revenue collection. Sharif said his government is planning key changes at the air and sea ports to raise money for a TFG budget, the details of which are being finalized. He is also forming an anti-corruption commission to root out theft by government officials. Sharif said that in two to three weeks the TFG's financial situation will be critical, especially in the security sector. While the TFG hopes to improve revenue collection, Sharif said he is asking internationals, including at a gathering of EU country ambassadors to Kenya, for budget support.

15. (U) Sharif said he still enjoys public support in Mogadishu, which has translated into popular pressure against violence. For his part, Sharif said he has been counseling peace, and avoiding

spoilors' violent provocations. Sharif said there has been progress integrating former ARS with TFG forces, but again reiterated his need for security assistance.

¶6. (SBU) President Sharif acknowledged our concerns about implementing extreme Islamic law. Testing President Sharif's sense of humor, the Ambassador urged Sharif not to undertake any "amputations or stonings." Sharif and his entourage broke into almost hysterical laughter. Sharif responded that, should the Ambassador visit Mogadishu, he would be in no danger of losing "a hand, a finger or so much as a fingernail." Sharif reminded us that the former Islamic Courts had never introduced such extreme Sharia law, and stated categorically that he would not do so. Sharif explained that his announcement of Sharia law was meant to blunt extremists' criticism of his Islamic credentials. Sharif said that first the Transitional Federal Charter, and ultimately the will of the Somali people will determine the nature of the Somali legal system. (Note: the Charter references Sharia law as the basis for national legislation. End Note.).

¶7. (U) Sharif shared with us some information about his discussions with Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki. Sharif said Kibaki had received him warmly, and pledged to support the TFG. Post has subsequently learned that the Kenyans provided a formal head-of-state welcome to Sharif at the airport, in contrast to the low-key reception former President Abdullahi Yusuf always received. Sharif said Kibaki and he discussed the insecurity along the Somali-Kenyan border, agreed on the need for a joint committee on border security, and resolved to better use a 2008 agreement on public sector exchanges and training. Sharif said Kibaki asked for a follow-on meeting during Sharif's scheduled Nairobi layover March 13 or 14.

NAIROBI 00000479 002 OF 002

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RANNEBERGER